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# BROCKTON

## A City Of Enterprise



BY COURTESY OF THE NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE  
SEPTEMBER, 1911

## **FOREWORD**

### **BROCKTON**

**The City That Makes Good!**

**Makes Good Citizens.**

**Makes Good Shoes.**

**Everyone Would Like to be in Brockton's Shoes.**

**Everyone Can.**

**Brockton Wants You.**

**That is just as True as that You were Born Barefooted.**

**Brockton—60,000 in 1911.**

**100,000 in 1920.**

**Brockton's Latch String is of Leather.**

**It is Hanging Out**

**For YOU.**





BROCKTON CITY HALL

By *Wm. H. H.*

FEB 5 1916



RAILROAD APPROACHES AND STATION, BROCKTON

## BROCKTON, A CITY OF ENTERPRISE

By HAMILTON LOWE

**I**T was "in the seventys" that Brockton acquired that habit of success which has ever since made it one of the most American of all our eastern cities. Back of that one can find history enough, but it is not the history of Brockton. The story of North Bridgewater (which was post-Brockton Brockton) belongs to the history of Bridgewater—North, South, East and West, and does not differ in essential characteristics from the other sections of the town from which it was essentially severed. But about all that North Bridgewater really contributed to Brockton was a citizenship of a few thousand people that were so much raw material on which or in which the new heaven worked so complete a transformation that almost any spot on the map upon which you could place your finger has more resemblance to old Bridgewater than has the hustling little city whose growth and prosperity seem to be a bit of the west plucked up by the roots and planted in New England.

It would be unjust to Bridgewater not to admit that the raw material was very good. Bridgewater is a fine old town,

and the stock was of the best. But it has never made Brocktons out of the other Bridgewaters. Back in those days when the real Brockton was born, you could always tell a Brockton man by his smile. He was just about the most thoroughly alert and modernized commodity that New England had to show. He was not up to the times, he was ahead of them. Only think of it, Brockton was the first city in the world to light its streets by electricity. It was the first city to run electric cars and the great Edison himself came on from New York to see the wheels go round. It was a leader in installing police telephone service, and when the Brockton city fathers went on to New York to see how it was done in the Metropolis, they found that it was not done at all, and New York had to come to Brockton to find out how. The city sewerage filtration plant has been studied by engineers from all over the United States. It works. It pours no filth into streams or harbors. I understand that it is currently believed in Brockton that they were the first to discover that the world moved around the sun. However that may be, they



THE ANGLIM BUILDING

certainly did get it bred into their very bones that the world moves. There was a Brockton spirit, and it was a spirit unafraid of traditions, and yet not in any sense anarchistic. Brockton acquired a habit of success, and with it a habit of growth.

Twenty years ago the city engineer plotted a curve of the probable population increase of the city for a considerable period,—clear up to 1930, I believe, and in no year has he been more than five hundred out of the way, while in one year he came within eight of the correct number and the average discrepancy between the figures indicated by his “curve of growth” and the facts is less than two hundred. That in a city of 60,000 is coming pretty close to the mark. He modestly calls it good guessing. As a matter of fact it was very scientific guessing. Now, of course, that is an interesting little story of itself, but the

really interesting thing about it is that, just as some communities have a habit of not growing, Brockton has a habit of growth that can be counted on as a pretty sure thing, and that, according to that habit, a very few years from now the city will take her place in the same rank with Worcester, Springfield and Lowell.

Of course, you will say, “that all depends on shoes.” It depends more on men than it does on shoes. A community with the enterprise and spirit of Brockton is quite sure to meet successfully manufacturing conditions as they develop. If shoes cannot be made profitably, they will make something else, but there is no reason why they should not be making shoes for a long, long time to come. They certainly know how to make them, and we certainly must wear them. In an age of universal specialization, there is no reason why a city should not



## BROCKTON, A CITY OF ENTERPRISE

specialize to some extent, as well as an individual. Undoubtedly as Brockton continues to grow a wider diversity of industries will become increasingly desirable, and as the need is felt, it will be met. There is a little movement that way already. Still, the principal advantage that Brockton has to offer to-day is to the manufacturer of shoes. Its prime advantages in this line are the confidence of the whole world in the brand of "Brockton Made," the possession of a larger number of the most skillful workmen in the shoe industry than any other community in the world can claim, and the highly developed state of the business in all its phases, including the presence of



PORTER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

allied industries utilizing waste and supplying parts. These are very solid advantages, and are not to be over balanced by cheap power or quick transportation, in neither of which directions Brockton is particularly deficient, but in which she lays claim to no special advantage.

It is proudly claimed for the city that its statistics show, side by side with those of Newton, the lowest death rate in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This is borne out by the actual figures, but the real reason for it is to be found in other

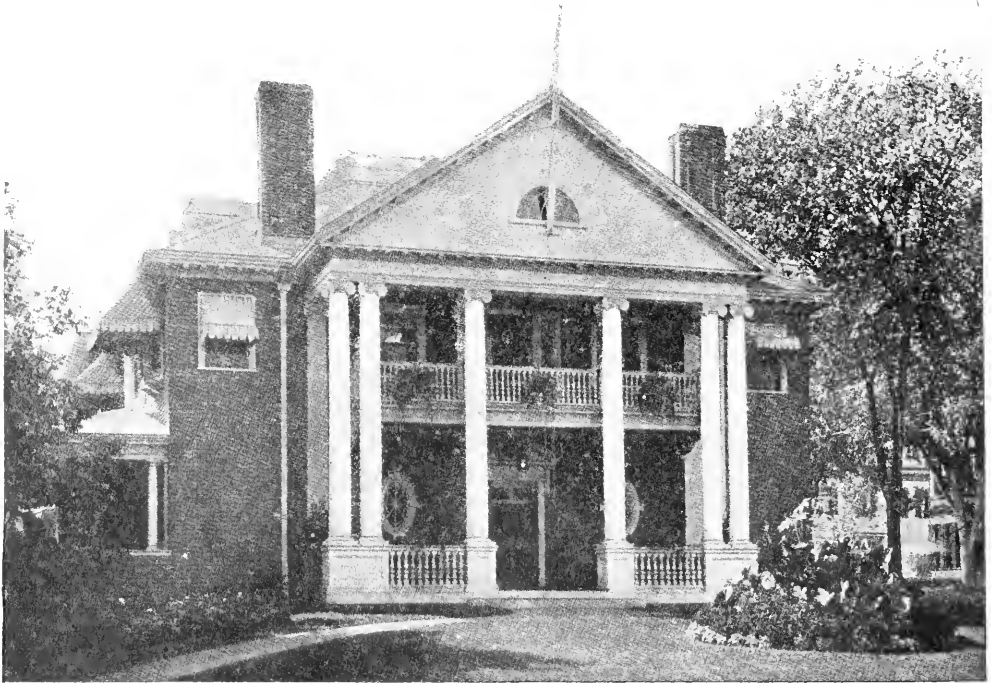


FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

than climatic conditions. Brockton is well located on high, dry ground some seventy feet above the sea although but fourteen miles from the shore. It has good water, taken from Silver Lake with two reservoirs to equalize the supply. It enjoys the benefit of careful sumptuary regulations. But the real cause of a high death rate apt to maintain in cities is the infant mortality in the congested districts, and the cause of a low death rate is the



NEW CATHOLIC CHURCH



HOME OF BROCKTON COMMERCIAL CLUB

absence of such districts and the intelligence and prosperity of the mass of the people. Brockton has no slums. The lowest wage paid in the city for common day labor is two dollars and a half for eight hours, while the average wage of all wage earners is three dollars and seventy-five cents a day—which is the highest average wage in the whole world. The wages earned by competent skilled labor are very high. Shut downs and strikes are practically unknown, to the joy and enrichment of the mercantile element of the community, as well as to the prosperity of wage earner and employer. The people are therefore prosperous, live well, educate their children and the low death rate is a natural consequence.

The high wages that rule in Brockton are largely the result of Union activity. Brockton is a Union city, and that fact alone entitles it to the careful study of the economist. The first and most palpable result of the high wages de-

manded by Union conditions is that it is practically necessary for Brockton manufacturers to turn out only a high-grade product. Cheap goods cannot be profitably manufactured on so high a wage scale. Brockton made good shoes ten years ago. She makes better shoes today. The Brockton made shoe is manufactured by the highest paid shoe operatives in the world. This brings to her factories the most skilled laborers and the manufacturer cannot afford to set such labor to work on careless designs or poor material. The Brockton shoe is therefore, in reality a high grade shoe, and its reputation as such is substantial and enduring. Occasionally a manufacturer may become restive under this restriction and desire to meet the large demand for a cheaper shoe. But on the whole, he is compelled to admit that the Brockton reputation, based on facts is worth more to him than such an extension of his market as would compromise that reputation. Another fact is that the

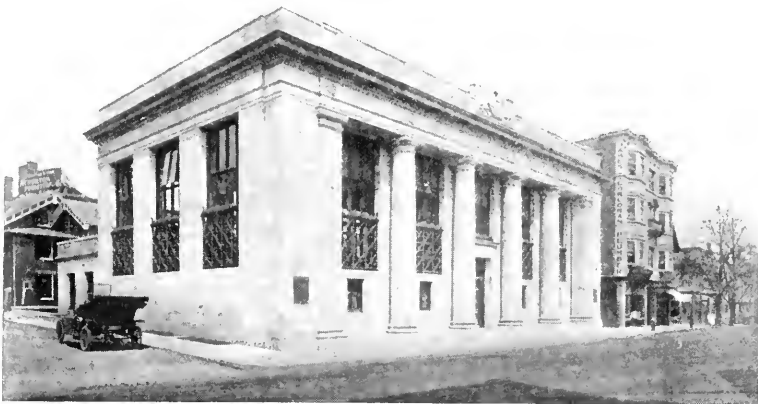
## BROCKTON, A CITY OF ENTERPRISE

unionizing of the Brockton shoe shops has eliminated labor troubles. By a contract between the manufacturer and the officers of the unions that supply him with help, all differences are submitted to the State Board of Arbitration, and the finding of that board is honored in all instances. The local unions are backed by the national unions, and a laborer who refuses to abide by the decision of the State Board of Arbitration cannot find employment in a union shop. The arrangement is, therefore, far from being a one-sided one. Nor is this condition a merely hypothetical one. Differences frequently arise, are carried to the Board, settled without strikes or lockouts and the decisions peacefully accepted by both parties. These decisions are sometimes in favor of the employer, sometimes in favor of the wage-earner. In either case the decision is accepted with the same law-abiding spirit. This use of the State Board of Arbitration by the Brockton shoe industry is of itself an important theme and worthy of far wider development than it is possible to give it in this article. Of course, there must be a point where the wage reaches its highest possible price without destroying the industry and killing the goose that lays the golden egg. Wisdom in finding and not exceeding or falling short of this point is the vital soul of the plan. It is

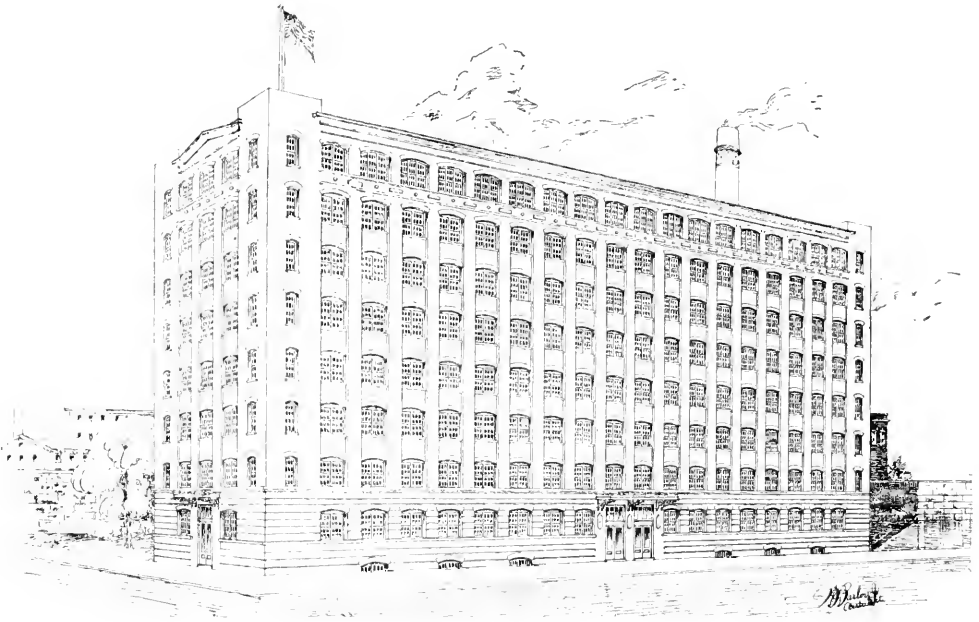
but just to say that no industrial city in the country contains less of the anarchistic spirit than unionized Brockton. Whatever there is of socialistic feeling is of a very moderate type. More of the children of the wage-earning classes carry their education into the high school grades than in any other industrial city in the state. Intelligence and order are manifest in a high degree. Brockton has for twenty-five years been a "dry" town, which in an industrial city of 60,000 people is a remarkable evidence of intelligence and morality.

Any re-arrangement of tariff schedules that seriously menaces the wage-scale of a city like Brockton should give the most serious concern to our national legislature.

The inevitable tendency toward the manufacture of high grade shoes created by the labor conditions as well as by the traditions of Brockton is brought out very forcibly by the latest available statistics. The year 1910, as is well known, was a trying one in all lines of business in the United States. The uncertainty always created by tariff legislation was enhanced by a new fear, a fear of the unknown, a suspicion that there was, after all, something unsound in our attacks on the great corporations called "trusts," and that the result of such attacks, persistently followed up, might



NEW BUILDING OF THE HOME NATIONAL BANK



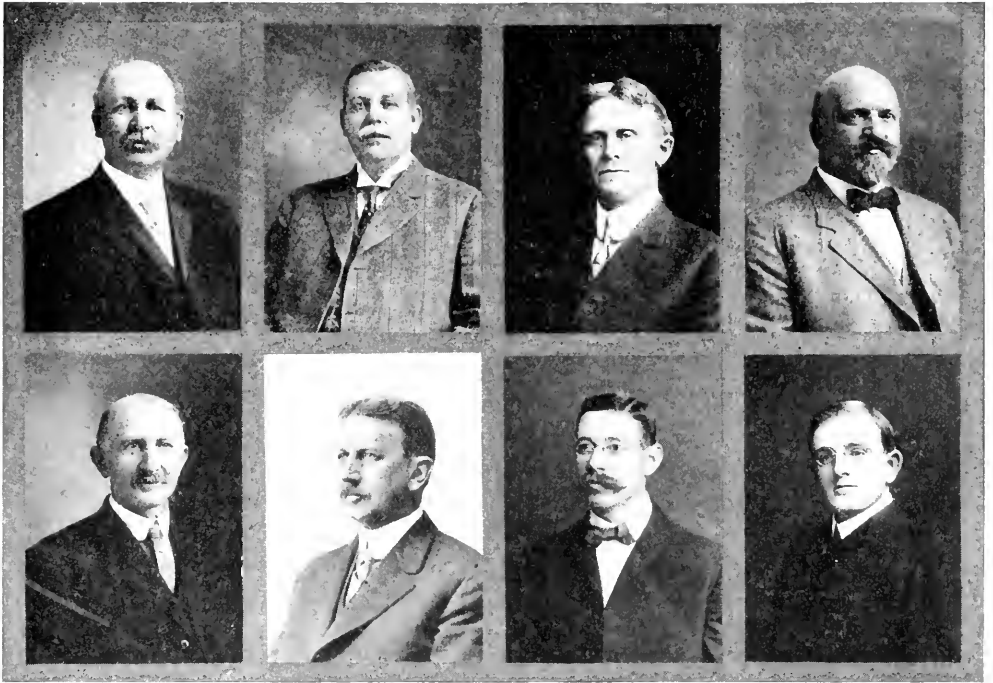
BROCKTON FACTORY ASSOCIATION'S PROPOSED FACTORY NO. 1

bring us to some new and unheard of disaster. Whether these fears were well or ill grounded, they resulted in the restriction of production and business caution. The total output of shoes in Brockton for the year 1910 was less by 24,374 cases than for the year 1909. The total number of cases shipped in 1910 was 819,926 as against 844,300 for 1909. On the other hand the wage cost in 1909 was \$12,157,920.00, and in 1910, \$11,806,934.40. In other words the wage cost per case in 1909 was \$14.40 and in 1910, \$14.52. At the same time, the value of the output for 1910 was \$20,263,200.00 as against a valuation of \$19,678,234.00 in 1909. That is to say, for the smaller output by 24,374 cases of shoes, Brockton received \$446,884.80 more money.

It should be noted in connection with these statistics that, in spite of this decrease in 1910, in which Brockton shared in the general business conditions of the country that year was the second largest in the history of the city, the decrease being by comparison with its banner year, 1909. Under equal business conditions 1910 would have been easily the

banner year, as in amount of money received it actually was, and the general condition of the city was correspondingly prosperous. The last year in Brockton is always the banner year. Brockton is steadily increasing its output, raising its standard, with a resulting increase in monetary value, and paying higher wages. As there were in 1910, 12,183 union shoe workers in Brockton, their average annual wage amounted to nearly if not quite (for it is impossible that a percentage were not always out of employment) to \$1,000.00 apiece. I opine that there are a good many "bank clerks" who would like to exchange finances with the shoe-workers of Brockton. It may be of interest to those unfamiliar with the figures and their meaning to know that the shipments indicated in these figures mean the manufacture and sale in Brockton of 19,678,234 pairs of shoes in 1909, or of 20,263,200 pairs of shoes in 1910. That is to say one person in five in the United States could have been shod with shoes made in the busy little New England shoe center. It is doubtful if any other industry in the United States, un-

## BROCKTON, A CITY OF ENTERPRISE



THE BROCKTON FACTORY ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

M. A. Davis  
J. S. Kent

W. R. Buchanan  
F. B. Howard

Le Baron Atherton  
J. E. T. Frazer

C. C. Eaton  
Wm. L. Wright

less it should be the manufacture of steel, which is controlled by local conditions and a great trust, can show anything like the same centralization of skilled labor and manufacturing brains.

It would not be possible within the scope of this article to tell the story of the individual firms engaged from time to time in the manufacture of shoes in Brockton, nor even of those that have been most immediately instrumental in the development of the industry. Among the best known names and brands are the Douglas shoe, manufactured by ex-Governor W. L. Douglas, the Walk-Over shoe, manufactured by the G. E. Keith Co.

The Nesmith Shoe Company, Stacy Adams and Company, The M. A. Packard Company, the Brockton Co-operative Boot and Shoe Company, Thomas D. Barry and Company, Churchill and Alden Company, Condon Brothers and Company, E. F. Copeland and Son, the Charles A. Eaton Company, the Field

Lumbert Company, and the Fred F. Field Company, A. E. Little and Company, the Howard and Foster Company, the Preston B. Keith Company, the C. S. Marshall Company, J. M. O'Donnell and Company, Bion F. Reynolds, Luke W. Reynolds, the Geo. H. Snow Company, the E. E. Taylor Company, Thompson Brothers and the Whitman and Keith Company.

An indication of the growth of the city and its present wealth may be gathered from the following facts—I do not call them "statistics." They are more than that. They are vital indications of the city's prosperity. Brockton erected in 1910 new buildings to the value of \$744,875.00 and showed an actual gain in valuation of \$2,732,302.59. The full valuation for 1910 is \$43,353,741.

For the maintenance of public schools the city expends \$265,000.00, and in no city of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are the interests of the schools more



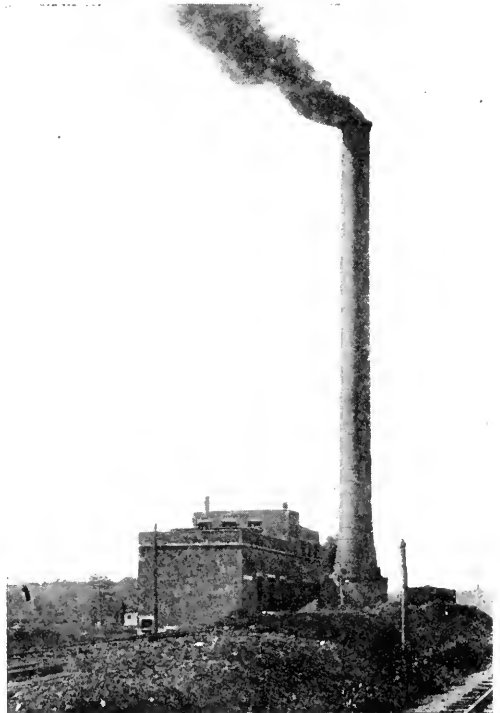
SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

jealously guarded. Her savings bank deposits were increased by \$1,203,199.81 in 1910, bringing the splendid total up to \$10,575,893.13. Since 1900 the city has increased in population by 42 per cent, and with her 134 manufacturing establishments, stands seventh in the list of 33 cities in the state in the value of manufactured products. As we have already indicated, the yearly earnings of all her wage earning population, including day laborers, is the highest of any city in the state and is figured at \$658.47.

The foremost social organization among the business and professional men of the city is the Commercial Club, whose handsome building on Main Street, attracts and interests the visitor. The object of the club is largely social, but it is none the less active in promoting the industrial good of the city. In a recent address Mr. Frank S. Farnum, the president of the club, said: "That the club spirit still lives is plainly evident in the fact that a large number of our members are sons of the founders of this club and are keenly watching their fathers and that they (the fathers) keep in touch

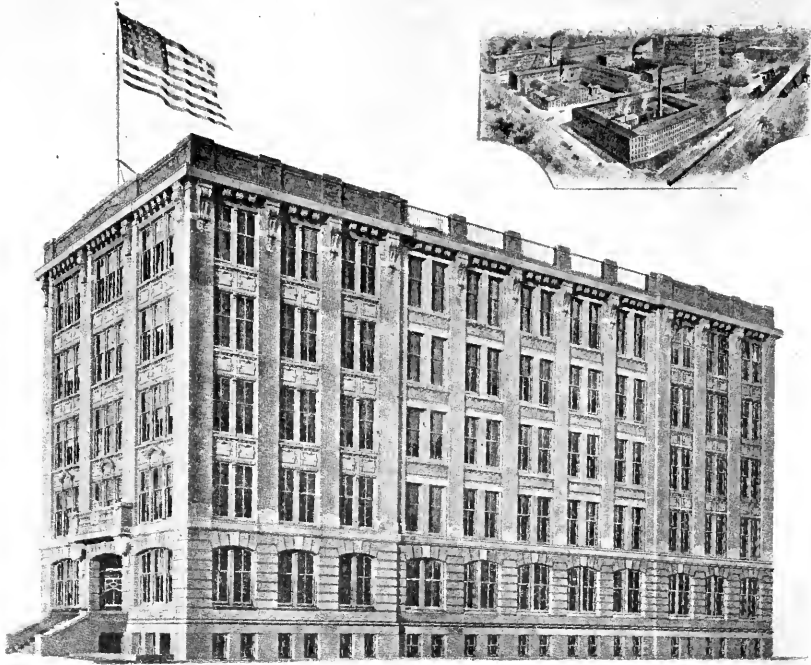
with club affairs."

The public service corporations of Brockton have undergone a very notable development. The street railway service is under the management of the Bay State Street Railway Company. Beginning with five miles of track, three cars and one snow plow, the company now operates 230 miles of track radiating to nine cities and towns and 793 motormen and conductors and 300 repair men handle the 445 cars and 47 snow plows that handle a passenger traffic of 1,000,000 daily. The growth from 1,750 daily passengers to 1,000,000, is, of course, due to the growth of the city. On the other hand, it may be truthfully said that, in no small degree, the growth of the city has been fostered by the enterprise and spirit of the street railway people. Not only has the service kept pace with the demand, it has created the demand by its wise extensions and careful attention to the interests of its patrons. The company entertains modern ideas of the obligations of a public service corpora-



EDISON ELECTRIC CO. POWER HOUSE

## BROCKTON, A CITY OF ENTERPRISE



ADMINISTRATION BUILDING AND PLANT OF GEO. E. KEITH COMPANY, CAMPELLO

tion, and studies the problems presented to it in the broadest possible way. It is a factor in the development of the public school system, in the reclamation of abandoned farms, and by offering reduced fares to laboring people at the morning and evening hours needed by them, has encouraged the owning of homes and the building up of the outlying districts. Its efficient service has also made a wide circle of surrounding country tributary to Brockton.

Equally interesting is the story of the growth of the Edison Electric Company in Brockton, and equally illustrative of the advanced ideas that obtain in that city and of its growth of the last two decades. The present Brockton station was the first Edison Central Station in the country from which current was distributed through three-wire underground conductors, and the construction of the work was carried out under the personal supervision of Mr. Thomas A.

Edison. It supplied current for the first fire station ever lighted by incandescent lamps. An automatic switch was so arranged that the sounding of an alarm at night lighted lamps in the building and at the same time liberated the horses. And this was a very marked advance in fire-fighting provisions. It is also a matter of local pride that the first Sprague electric motor ever built was made and tested in the local power house, and it is generally accepted locally that the current supplied by this truly historic plant operated the first electric car line. No wonder that Brockton people have acquired a habit of keeping to the forefront of progress! The Brockton Electric Station was formally opened for commercial service October 1, 1883, and was equipped with three Edison bipolar generators, having a capacity of 1,800 sixteen candle power lamps.

To-day there are 23 generators, supplying a current sufficient for 121,200





THE JAMES EDGAR BUILDING

sixteen candle power lamps. The company supplies electric service to Brockton, Whitman, East Bridgewater, Bridgewater, West Bridgewater, Stoughton and Avon and disposes of a surplus to the Electric Light and Power Company of Abington and Rockland, which supplies another wide circle of thriving towns, such as the Abingtons, the Hanovers, Cohasset, the Scituates, Egypt, Greenbush and Norwell. Thus does Brockton, through the enterprise and progressive spirit of another of its public service corporations extend its influence and commercial supremacy. That electric power is increasing in popularity among the manufacturers is shown by the fact that in 1905 there were connected with the Edison lines 678 horse power and in 1911 the total had increased to five times that amount, or 3,606 horse power. Previous to 1859 private parties in Bridgewater owned a small gas-works property but in that year a corporation

was chartered under the title of the North Bridgewater Gas Light Company, with a capital stock of \$12,000. The private plant was purchased, including between three and four miles of pipe, an annual capacity of 1,500,000 cubic feet and a storage capacity of 10,000 cubic feet. To-day this company has a magnificent plant occupying three acres, and distributes its product through 110 miles of pipe. Its annual capacity has grown to the enormous total of 250,000,000 cubic feet with a storage capacity of 1,000,000 cubic feet. In 1881 the name of the company was changed to the Brockton Gas Light Company. A very interesting paper is the first treasurer's report from which it appears that the revenue from the first six months' business was, for gas \$1,650.77, for tar, \$72.50, for sundries \$21.60, a total volume of business of \$1,744.88, for six months. It is good to note these figures and to consider by what gradual steps



## BROCKTON, A CITY OF ENTERPRISE

and from what small and careful beginnings so many of our successful corporations have grown.

The standards of a community cannot well rise above the standards of the public institutions of that community. The systems that have for their incentives the betterment of the educational, social, religious and physical conditions of men and women, which gain only as they can produce the evidence of their worth, are after all the creators of public standards. The community is judged by its churches and schools. The last word has not yet been spoken on our public school system at large, but among the foremost schools from the standpoint of scope and efficiency, of the corps of teachers, and the quality of their work, and of comparative rating among schools in New England, Brockton is found.

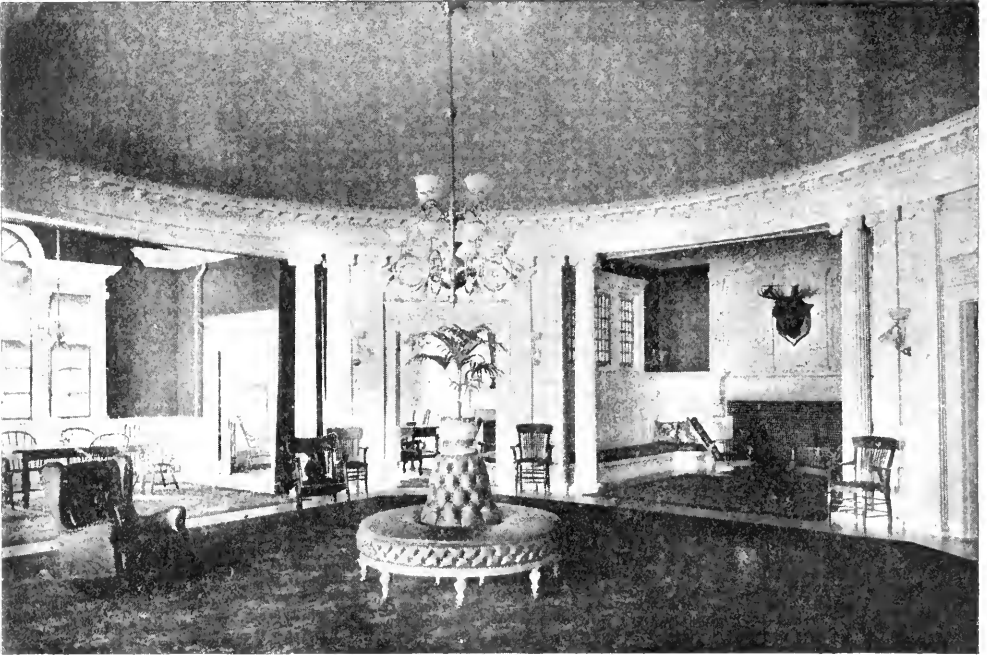
No one will venture a final word in the matter of the service the church should render its community; though all agree that there would be no community of any moment, if there were no churches in it. The Brockton churches of all denominations have given them-

selves to the community interest, for the sake of the community and the leavening influence of the Christ Spirit, rather than the building up of material appearance, though some splendid architectural specimens exist.

It may be said of the Protestant churches in Brockton, that while they are not far distant from Plymouth geographically, they have enlarged their visions of church functions to so great a degree that the church of the Pilgrims exists only in its fundamentals. No better illustration of an effort on the part of the church to be all things to all people can be found than that of the South Congregational Church. In a recent circular the different phases of the church activities were classified as religious, social, educational and physical. Religiously, apart from regular preaching and prayer services this church maintains the largest Congregational Sunday School in the state, 1,338 members, with an average attendance of over 700, and other activities of corresponding strength and vitality, including many forms of social, educational and evangelical work. The



BARRISTER'S HALL



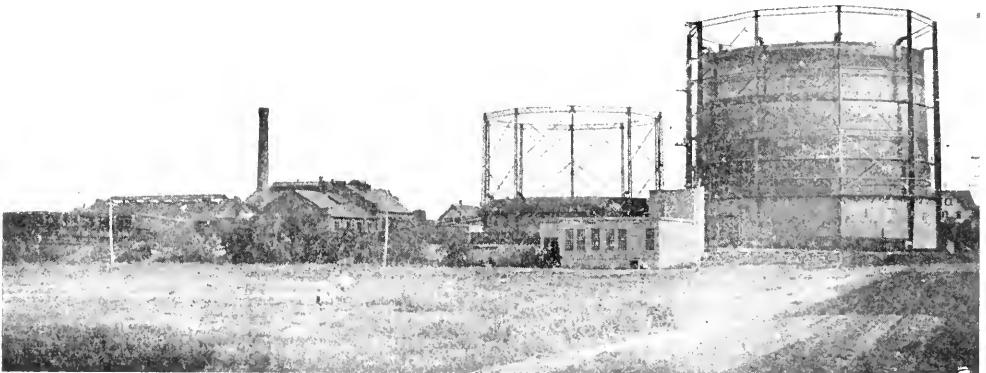
Y. M. C. A. RECEPTION ROOM

particular facts concerning this great church are only selected illustratively and because it would not be possible to enter the story of each church in the city, of many of which a story as interesting and inspiring could be told.

It would be pleasant to be able to give an account of the work of the Brockton Y. M. C. A., one of the most wide-awake and active organizations of its kind in

the Eastern States, conducting a particularly fine work among boys and among the foreign population, conducting citizenship classes, a vacation farm and many other earnest and useful activities.

The Woman's Club of Brockton is another strong organization working for the welfare of the city. With a membership of 600 and a waiting list of 400, it is



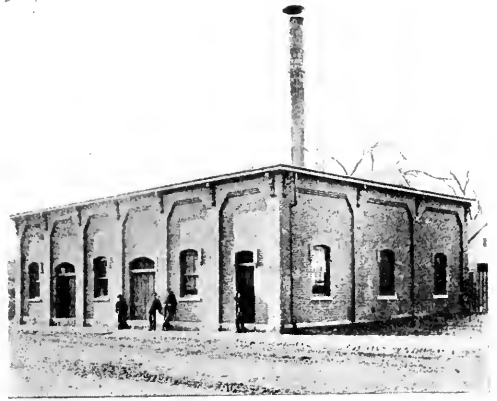
PLANT OF BROCKTON GAS COMPANY

## BROCKTON, A CITY OF ENTERPRISE

one of the strongest clubs in the state. Perhaps its most distinctive and important public work at present is the nucleus which the club is forming for a museum of art in Brockton. Several fine pictures have been purchased, and the plan of work is such as to interest every citizen, as only small contributions from individuals are accepted.

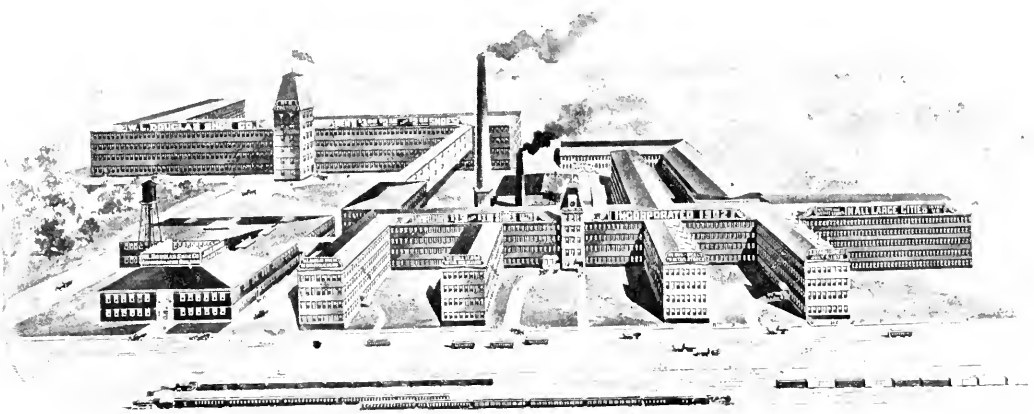
To interest every citizen! Have we not accidentally come to the phrase that is the keynote of Brockton's success? With every citizen interested, Brockton's future is assured beyond the reach of accident.

The extension of the manufacturing interests of the city are not being left to chance. In addition to watchful individual efforts and the usual Board of Trade activities, a fine brick factory is about to be raised from funds subscribed by Brockton business men, as an available plant for any suitable industry, shoe manufacturing or other, that may desire a location in the city. It is not at all probable that this substantial inducement will go begging, and Brockton, within the next year, is almost certain to enjoy the increased prosperity and the growth incident to the location of a new and substantial industry. The Brockton Board of Trade is undergoing something of an awakening at present, and it is

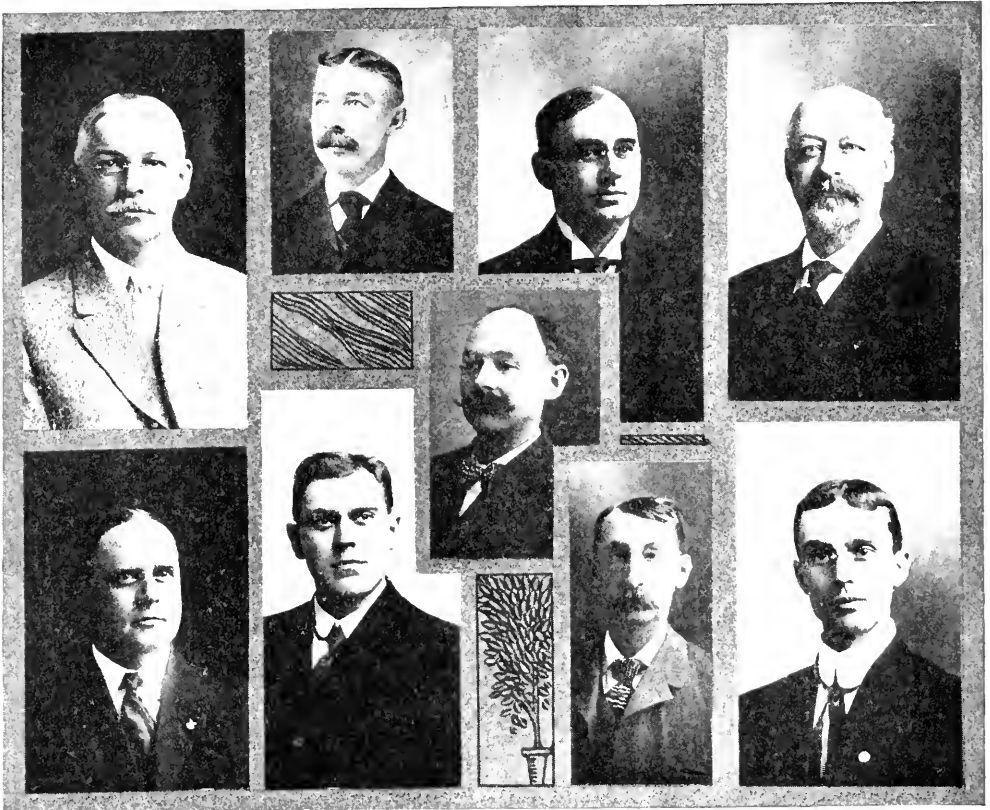


OLD BUILDING OF EDISON ELECTRIC COMPANY

probable that the services of a regularly salaried expert will be engaged as a secretary, although there is something of a movement in favor of resolving the commercial organizations of the city into a Chamber of Commerce. As a matter of fact, the community has rather outgrown the stage where voluntary and accidental individual initiative will suffice for the further development of its commercial interests. There is no falling off in the "Brockton spirit," but the problems are too big to be handled in that way, and call for organized activity and regularly employed expert service.



THE DOUGLAS SHOE COMPANY PLANT

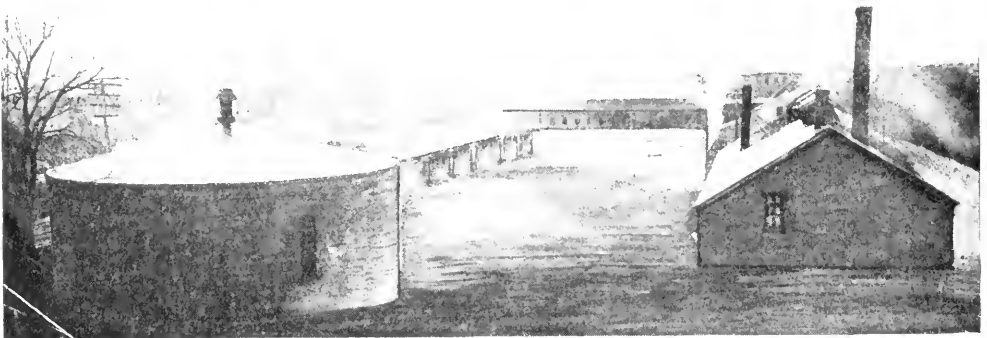


OFFICERS OF THE BROCKTON BOARD OF TRADE

Dr. C. S. Millett C. W. Bixby Ellery C. Dean E. S. Thompson Kenneth McLeod  
F. T. Youngquist A. H. Andrews, Pres. H. A. Poole, Treas. G. E. Spear

A sketch of this brevity cannot even touch upon the many subjects of interest which arrest the attention of even the most casual observer in this live and beautiful city. We have been compelled to ignore many improvements now in

progress and have been able to find no space for that most vital element in the story of any town—the individual men whose brains and courage have built it. But Brockton itself is the best monument of Brockton men.



OLD PLANT OF THE BROCKTON GAS COMPANY



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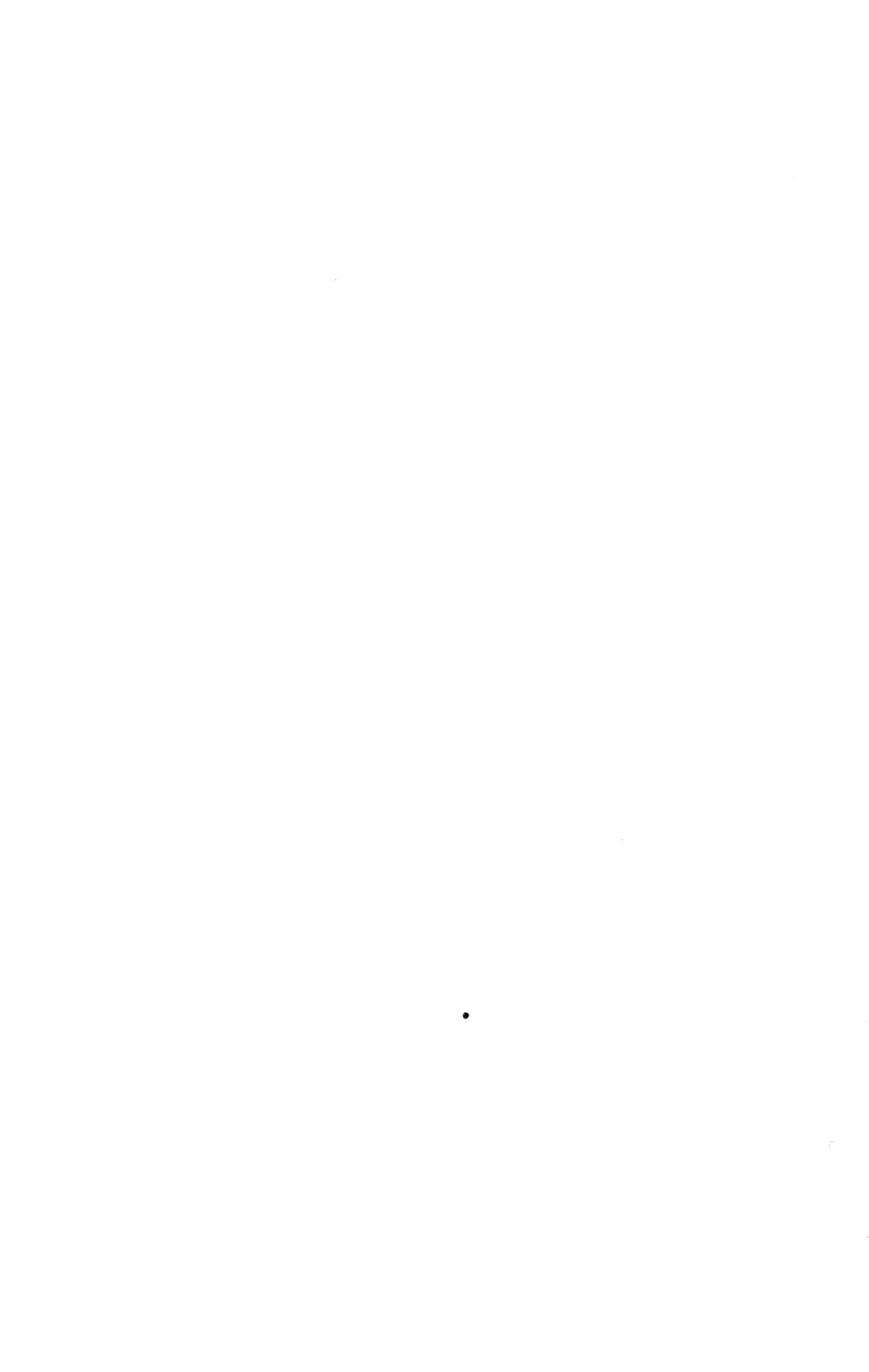
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